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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 324. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 16, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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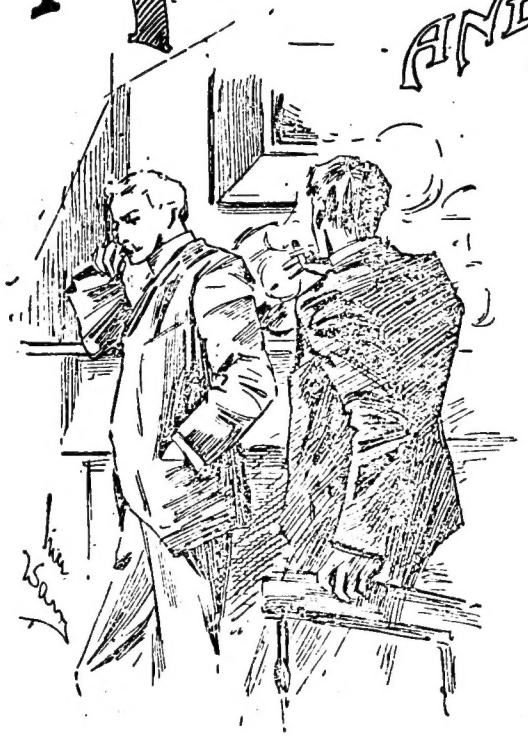
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 324.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 16, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A Good Man — AND True



"You understand, my dear fellow? To put it quite plainly, you know, a wife of this kind is a nuisance."

He stood tugging at his blonde moustache, his whole handsome face—boyish still, in some way, spite of his twenty-eight years—irritated and vengeful.

Reginald Mansfield regarded him attentively through the blue smoke of his cigarette.

"It strikes me," he observed, at last, "that you, to use an expression of our French neighbours, are complaining that the bride is too fair."

Herbert Latimer bit his lip.

"Well, that is just what I am doing! Lena is too fond, by George! Of course, she's the sweetest, best little girl in the world; but, hang it, a man can't be cried at every time he happens to come home a little late from the club! Lena is a perpetual fountain of salt tears. She thinks everything a sin, besides—cards, dances, all the rest of it. I did not mind it the first few months. No man does. But, frankly, Reg, it's beginning to pall. Hang it, I say! She should have married a youthful clerk, with lodgings in the suburbs, to which he would have returned by six or seven every evening! She could have waited on the doorway for him then, and she would have been happy."

Reginald Mansfield knocked the ashes from his cigarette.

"It is possible, as you say, that she would have been more happy under those circumstances. I have been told, I think, that she was a country girl herself? She did not belong to the swim—as you do."

"Oh, yes, she was a country girl," cried Herbert pettishly, "but her people have good blood, all the same; there have been men and women of the world among them; I don't see how Lena comes by her provinciality. She has had a chance recently to cure herself of it, too. As Mrs. Herbert Latimer, she has not been out enough, goodness knows. But there's the bother of it! You can't get her to care. Amusements, admiration, toilets, her own beauty—all that doesn't count for Lena."

"I see. She would prefer her husband's love and devotion."

"Bah!—love, devotion! Fiddlesticks! She knows, and you should know, Reg, that I'm as fond of her as a man can be, but when it comes to toeing the mark as Lena would like me to, why I'm not there, that's all! By George, I'm not a parson, you know."

"No, you're not."

Latimer gave a short laugh.

"Well, no more are you, Reg. You've made the pace pretty rapidly, you know."

"Ye—es," drawled Reginald Mansfield. "Still, I am not married."

Latimer laughed again. "I'd pity your wife if you were. Frankly, now, Reg, were you ever really in love with a woman? I don't mean was your blood ever stirred. By Jove, you've had love affairs in plenty, but I mean, did you really ever seriously care?"

As the other gave no answer, he ran on, reverting to his own concerns in the light way characteristic of his volatile nature. "'Pon honour, though, Reg, what do you advise me to do about Lena? I decided upon this three months' trip on the Continent with Benedict and the rest of that party—a sort of bachelor tour—just to teach Lena a salutary lesson, as it were; just to show her that a man, in our way of life, wants his liberty; that a wife can't draw him about in leading-strings. But the scene she made when she heard I was going—— "

"Scene?" Reginald broke in. "I cannot fancy Mrs. Latimer, from what I have heard of her, making a scene."

"Oh, I don't mean in the usual feminine way, of course; Lena's a lady to the finger-tips. But she looked tragic, you know; as if she could never smile again; as if I were deserting her. Now, I repeat, what do you advise me to do? You know women, if ever a man did."

"Go," said Reginald, shortly, after a brief pause.

"Go?" exclaimed the other, with a sigh of immense relief. "Well, old fellow, that's what I think too! It may do her good."

"It may," assented Mansfield.

* * * * * *

It was a week later. Herbert Latimer had left for Paris.

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A slight, girlish figure in a straight, flowing dress advanced.

Reginald Mansfield was walking up from the club to Herbert Latimer's house to see Herbert Latimer's wife. It was his first visit. He had been in the North when Herbert had married; and he had returned but a few days prior to the conversation just reported. On the evening of his arrival he had gone to see a woman of a certain age, an old friend of Herbert Latimer, once the friend of Reginald's own mother. She was a woman of the world, who had kept the depth of her heart and feeling and who had looked on many of the chances and phases of life with her clear, steady eyes. The talk had turned on Herbert Latimer's wife.

"She is a simple country lassie, is she not?" asked Reginald.

"She has a rare and charming nature, strong and sweet—far too good for Herbert. But she adores him—as girls of that stamp adore men of his."

"Oh, Herbert is not bad."

"Not at all. But weak. A weak Adonis. Men of that order always have the best love lavished upon them." Mrs. Percy paused a moment. Then she raised her eyes to Reginald's. "She looks like Eleanor," she added in a gentle tone.

She saw that he changed colour. "How that memory lives with him!" she thought. She alone knew this man as he was. She alone had known closely the dead girl who had been the dream of his young manhood. When people spoke of Reginald as a Lothario she would remark quietly: "Let us not judge too much from the surface."

"She looks like Eleanor."

Those few words of Mrs. Percy had been persistently in Reginald Mansfield's mind as Herbert Latimer had come to him a few days later with his grievance. They were in his mind as he rang the bell of the young man's house.

Like Eleanor! Was it true? For an instant, as he waited in the wide, dim drawing-room, he wished that he had not come. Then a curtain was raised and dropped again. A slight, girlish figure in a straight, flowing dress advanced. Mrs. Latimer put out her hand.

"You are a good friend of my husband. I have heard of you often; I'm very glad to see you," she said.

But Reginald Mansfield stood for an instant as one bereft of sense. Mrs. Percy was right. Here was the same rare Madonna type of beauty, the same low, broad brow, the same pathetic mouth, the same expression of the violet eyes—his heart beat fast with the sudden ache that he had so often hoped was stilled.

"Are you not well?" asked Lena Latimer, startled. He had already recovered himself, with an effort.

"You will think me absurd," he said lightly. "But you look strangely like—someone I used to know."

. . . . . .

It was a hot, cloudy morning at the end of August. Herbert Latimer stood in the morning-room of Mrs. Percy's Mayfair house, and words, the enormity of which prevented him as it were from seizing their full import, words which made his brain reel, which had accompanied his arrival, fell upon his ringing ears.

"Reginald? Reginald Mansfield, Lena?" he repeated, twice, thrice, and his hand went up to his forehead.

Mrs. Percy tapped her fingers with her fan.

"Well, my dear boy—allow me to call you so, since I have known you always—what is so singular in what I tell you? I have known Reginald always, too, and I know there is no harm in your pretty wife. But, what would you have? You do not expect such a young beauty as that to remain always the unsophisticated rustic maiden that she was when you married her?

"Had you been an exceptionally devoted husband—mind, I don't blame you; you must be men, especially in what outsiders call our 'set'—you might have kept the same adoration that she gave you at first. But you must acknowledge that you went your way a little. Well, what is the result? Lena, too, has emancipated herself in your absence. She has become *fin de siècle*—like the other young married women with whom she is thrown in contact in our society."

The blood mounted to Herbert Latimer's forehead in a purple flush.

"Never, Mrs. Percy! I shall never believe——"

"I don't mean any harm. Did I not tell you that I believed Lena a perfectly good woman? But Reginald Mansfield is a fascinating man and Lena is a very lovely creature, and they have happened to be much thrown together this summer and a little flirtation has sprung up. Is that anything new for people in the swim?"

"A little flirtation?" Herbert said the words after her, with a short laugh, not pleasant to hear. The flush had died out of his face. Lines which had not been there a half-hour before had come about his mouth and eyes. Mrs. Percy's steady glances never left him. "Oh, of course, perfectly harmless," he went on. "And that Lena should go off on the yacht with the Wentworths, and that Reginald Mansfield should go with them also, and Mrs. Wentworth's reputation for strictness what it is—that is perfectly proper, too!"

"Hold! hold! Don't exaggerate. Mrs. Wentworth may be frivolous—again, my dear boy, is she not in the swim? and must not young married women amuse themselves? There! but she is a good woman, for all that. I see nothing shocking in this yachting party."

"No. And probably, Mrs. Percy, you see nothing shocking

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in Lena leaving London yesterday to 'amuse' herself, as you say, on the very afternoon that she knew I would arrive?"

Mrs. Percy shrugged her shoulders. Her visitor had turned towards the door.

"Where is the yacht likely to be now? I take it that you are informed, Mrs. Percy."

"I believe it is to be at Cowes to-morrow, or the day after. You are not going?"

But he had vanished.

One moment the old lady stood musing; and her teeth, white and fine still, showed in the peculiar smile that parted her lips.

"What will the outcome be?" she murmured. "And then—Alas, what fools, what astonishing fools, men can be, at times, to be sure!"

. . . . . .

A mist had come up and lay, an impenetrable veil, over the sea. The rocks were moist with it as if with spray. In the prevailing neutrality of the atmosphere's tints a woman's yachting dress of blue and red made a warm, picturesque spot, blurred and deep, in the foggy perspective. A man, stalking along with swift strides, caught a sudden vision of this dash of colour, and of the slender, well-known frame it clothed at an abrupt terminus of the rocky walk. It was Lena, and she was not alone. A man walked by her side too, whom he (Herbert) could have no difficulty in recognising. The tall, loosely built, nonchalant figure was that of Reginald Mansfield.

The two had stopped now. Their backs were turned. But, sharpened to abnormal acuteness, Herbert's senses could divine, as it were, their mental attitude at the moment, betrayed in the pose of their vague, dark silhouettes. Lena, her head bent away from her companion, seemed to be looking out to sea, and, as Herbert advanced rapidly nearer, something listless, dejected, became more clear in the droop of her shoulders. But Reginald Mansfield looked not at the sea, but at her. He stood near her, so near that his hand could touch her elbow. The blood surged up in Herbert's heart, and at that instant the two faced about to retrace their steps and saw him advancing.

"Herbert, dear You here?"

Lena was the first to speak. She had turned from white to red and back to white. A suppressed trembling had seized her. But her voice was clear and steady.

"Herbert, dear! You here? How did you know where the yacht would be to-day? I thought of you as being in London. Who told you where we were?"

Herbert's white, dry lips framed two words shortly:

"Mrs. Percy."

Reginald Mansfield raised his eyebrows.

"Ah, yes. To be sure, she would know. You had a jolly summer, I suppose, Latimer?" Calmly he met the glare of Herbert Latimer's eyes.

But Mrs. Latimer, laughing nervously, had touched her husband's sleeve. She turned her glance to Reginald Mansfield, and there was something like a wild repressed appeal in it. Did he read its meaning aright? He took off his hat.

"Will you permit me to withdraw, Mrs. Latimer? I am sure that after your separation your husband's companionship must be the only one acceptable."

He nodded to Herbert, but received no look from the latter in return.

The next instant husband and wife were alone, and then the floodgates of Herbert Latimer's jealous rage and indignation were opened. Lena stood silent, with downcast eyes, as the hot words poured over her. She was, then, he asked, like every other woman? The great trust he had had in her truth, believing it so perfect that not even the shadow of a frivolous flirtation could touch it, was, then, proved to be unfounded? He had, perhaps, not been a model husband himself. He acknowledged it.

He had been in the wrong. He had gone after his own pleasures. He had seemed to neglect her. He had, in fact, neglected her. He had the misfortune of having been bred among people who looked upon such things as legitimate. But, through all, he had always felt that, faulty as he might be, that she was unassailable. Mrs. Percy, however, had told him all that had been going on through the summer. And a flirtation with Reginald Mansfield, of all men! A flirtation with his own friend!

In intolerable despair he talked on. And then he stopped. What more was there to say? Sharply he turned from her.

Was he going from her? She raised her head, she watched him as he walked away, blindly, as one who is stunned.

"Herbert!" she suddenly cried out, with a rapturous note of joy and love. She ran after him, she clung to him, all her sweet Madonna face was covered with tears and smiles. "Herbert! Beloved! beloved! It was only to test you, only to teach you, by your own pain, what mine had been! Truly, truly, I have given no thought to Mr. Mansfield save such thought as one gives a good, good friend. He has seemed very 'attentive,' as the world speaks of such things, but he has been only kind, oh, so kind! You see I look like—like some one he loved once, and so he was my friend from the first. He saw how miserable I was, dear, about your going on the Continent, about your seeming indifference—for, indeed, I thought you cared nothing for me any more! Oh, was I not foolish? Do I not see now, in your eyes; do I not feel by the clasp of your arms, how much you loved me in truth?

"But I was wretched, and Mr. Mansfield discovered it, and because he felt as a friend to me he thought of this plan. He and Mrs. Percy. She, too, has been, oh, so good to me. Together they combined it all. She was to see you and tell you when you arrived, and I was to go off with the Wentworths.

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on the yacht, and with Mr. Mansfield. It was all to keep up the appearance of the comedy we were playing! And it was to have been kept up much longer; I was not to divulge the truth to you until you were well tried. But I cannot, cannot play this farce another moment when I love you so! I see and feel that you so love me!"

She was weeping, now, in his arms. Tightly clasped Herbert held her. When, at length, she looked up, his face was changed—graver, colder, firmer than she had seen it.

"Yes, dear Lena, the comedy was played long enough, child, long enough. The lesson has been well learned. It has been taken to heart."

. . . . . .

Two weeks later Reginald Mansfield returned to town. In the evening he went to Mrs. Percy's. The old lady greeted him with an exclamation:

"Where have you been all this time? In hiding? In every manner I have tried to get news of your whereabouts. And not only I, but Lena, and Herbert Latimer himself. I think the latter wants to thank you, honestly, for bringing him to his senses. He has already thanked me. Never was a conspiracy crowned with more admirable success. They are turtle doves now—turtle doves! Herbert will remain to the end, I believe, a model mate; and as for Lena, she is supremely, completely blissful. You have done a good work, my dear fellow."

She paused, and then something caused her to regard him more attentively.

"Turn your face to the lamp," she said, brusquely. Off his guard, he did so. Thereupon Mrs. Percy gave a low expostulatory cry.

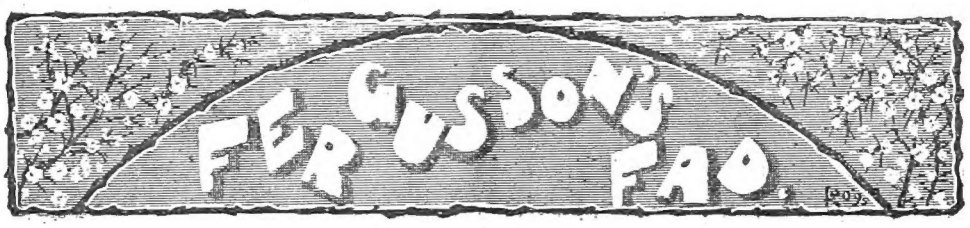
"Reginald!—that is not why you have been in hiding, is it?—not truly this, boy?"

At the tone of deep, interested sympathy Reginald covered his face with his hands. After an interval he raised his head.

"Yes," he said slowly. "I am afraid it is so. I care for her. She is another man's wife and it has an ugly sound. But the feeling I have for her could not stain a flower. I thought it was only friendly interest at first, because she was so like——. But she was too like! It was playing with fire. I have been suspecting my real feeling some time. I knew it when Herbert came back, and by the look in his eyes I realised how much he cared for her and that they would be reconciled." He got up. "Well, I shall have to live it down, as I did the other."

Mrs. Percy held his hand a moment. Her eyes were moist.

"My poor boy!" she said. "They are happy. But you——."



"AND this is what you call a 'kind criticism,'" cried Mrs. Flora Forester, with tears in her sweet blue eyes.

Linwood stared at the newspaper with a mortified frown. "It's too bad," he said. He liked Mrs. Forester, and pitied her; they were excellent friends. He thought her latest novel of London society a very breezy and artistic performance. He belonged to the staff of the *Daily Umpire*, and he had given the book to their "literary man," Fergusson, and asked him to write kindly about it. Fergusson, who was not more than three and thirty, and desired undisputed sway in his own limited realm of book reviewing, had sniffed a little at this request. But he had promised to look into the novel and see what he could do, and Linwood had expected of him something at least fairly civil.

"I hadn't seen to-day's book-column before," he said to Mrs. Forester, with ill-concealed disgust. "But one never knows what Fergusson will do with a book. Luckily this is only a small paragraph."

"Into which," sighed Mrs. Forester, "are condensed five distinct sneers."

"The truth is, that Fergusson belongs to that class of critics who despise the society novel, or English novels at all. The French, and the Spanish, and the Russians—especially the Russians—are their delight. Fergusson has lately been bitten by that craze. Upon my word," pursued Linwood, laughing a little, "he's at heart the nicest young fellow in the world. But he has somehow got himself into the queerest condition. If he sees Mayfair or Piccadilly in a book, he always feels like either shutting it up or reviling it."

Mrs. Forester bit her lip musingly. "M—yes. I understand," she replied. And then she smiled a little oddly, in her gentle, wise way. "I know something of Russia. I lived in St. Petersburg for two years; my late husband, you know, held a diplomatic place there. It often strikes me that these passionate Transatlantic admirers of Tolstoi, and Tourgénieff, and several other famous Russian writers, can scarcely grasp the 'realism' they belaud. Really, being so ignorant of actual Russian life, I cannot quite see how they are able at all to verify it."

Linwood gave an amused chuckle. "Neither can I! You actually know the Russians' language, don't you, apart from your familiarity with many of their native and distinctive customs?"

"Oh, yes," she smiled. "But I *speak* Russian very poorly."

The next day when Linwood saw Fergusson at the office of the *Umpire*, he said, in his dreamy and lazy way: "Oh, by-the-bye, you didn't give poor Mrs. Forester's book much of a send off, Jack, did you?"

Fergusson looked up from his desk. He was reading a translation of one of Valdès's novels. He didn't know Spanish at all well; he had never been in Spain; he had already made up his mind to praise this novel copiously for its marvellous truthfulness to life. And by "life" the life of modern Spain must here inevitably be meant.

"No, Robert," he said. "A reviewer should be conscientious, you know, or nothing. Frankly, I thought your friend's view of society at the present time a curiously—ahem—feverish and—er—unauthentic one."

"I see," said Linwood drily. "Mrs. Forester goes about a good deal here, now that she's left off her widow's mourning."

"Oh, indeed!" Fergusson's eyes were busy again with the pages of his translated Spanish novel. "It—er—seems to me that I have heard somehow, somewhere, that she is a good deal sought after nowadays."

"No; not 'sought after' in any marked sense. She receives cards to a good many nice places, however, and often goes to them. Her observations, I mean, are usually first hand."

"Oh, yes! Quite so."

"Have *you* been much into society lately?" Linwood innocently went on.

"I?" Here Fergusson started, and then shrugged his shoulders. "I'm in mourning for my father, you know."

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"Yes; you've been in mourning ever since you took this place on the *Umpire*, haven't you? That was about four months ago, and previously, my dear Jack, you were on the Continent for three years. I remember that you went abroad just after we both took our degrees at Oxford."

Linwood delivered this parting shot very mildly. He always did everything mildly. You could have sworn that of him, after a glance at his placid, clean-shaven lips and his large grey, reposeful eyes.

But he would speak quiet words, now and then, that had the cuts of knives in them. To a fellow-editor whom he liked (a shaggy bearded man named Fosdick, who wrote poignant financial and social articles that often struck the public tellingly, and helped to sell the paper), he soon made certain remarks which roused a vigorous laugh.

"Why, my dear Robert," exclaimed Fosdick, trying to smooth that recalcitrant beard of his whose amber tangles needed for such purpose nothing short of a stringent and uncompromising comb—"why, my dear Robert, I'd love to fool Jack Fergusson in some such way! He deserves it for his ridiculous carping at modern story-tellers."

Linwood stroked his beardless chin with one meditative hand. "If I wrote the thing we could manage to bring it out cheaply, with our 'printing' pull, and all that. Only a few copies, you know, need be got out at first, and we could put as an *imprimatur* the 'Waverley Publishing Company,' or 'The Dorchester Press,' or something imposing and mystifying. There's a good deal of that sort of thing done nowadays, you know, in the way of a send-off for current fiction."

"Yes, quite right. We could manage the hoax dirt cheap, as soon as you have got it ready."

One day, several weeks later, Linwood paused at the side of Fergusson, where he sat before a book-piled desk. He was deep in an Italian translation of a novelist who holds high rank, just now, throughout the famed and historic peninsula. "Busy, Jack?" Linwood drawled.

"Oh, no," said Fergusson, "not particularly. I was only finishing this lovely story. Ah, how these fellows understand the full meaning of life, Robert!"

"Yes; no doubt. I don't read much fiction, at present. I wish I had more time for it. By the way, here's a small novel by a great friend of Tourgénieff's. You see it isn't very handsomely printed, though, after all, the get-up is fairly decent."

"Yes; yes."

Fergusson spoke somewhat eagerly. He had abandoned his Italian tale, and was turning over the pages of the paper-covered book which Linwood had laid before him.

"A great friend of Tourgénieff's?" he murmured. "I've never heard of any Russian author named Vladimir Karanoff. Ah! here is a preface. Explanatory, I suppose?"

"And yet quite short," said Linwood, "like the story itself. The unhappy young man died in his twenty-eighth year—shot as a Nihilist, though the accusation against him was afterwards found to be a false one. The inscription on his tomb, written by his famous friend, is given there in the preface. I think it is not translated. Is it?"

"No."

"Mrs Forester can tell you what it means. She put it all into English."

"Mrs. Forester?" queried Fergusson, raising his eyes. "The lady whose book——"

"You 'slated.' Oh, yes; but she's got over that long ago, especially as her novel went so well with the public. You know you promised, Jack, that I should take you to one of her 'At Homes.'"

"Mrs. Forester did the whole thing then?" said Fergusson, turning over the pages of the book, and letting his eye leap along the lines, in the way of the professional critic.

"She's the translator—yes, as I just told you."

"It contains a good many Russian words, I perceive."

"She thought those at least *partially* untranslatable," said Linwood with splendid gravity. "When you personally meet her she will no doubt define for you their *true* meaning as well as lies in her power."

And this, about a week later, Mrs. Forester did. Meanwhile Fergusson (who had a good deal of work distracting and pressing upon him, as happens with most modern newspaper critics) had written a column and a half in the *Umpire* on Vladimir Karanoff's novel. He had praised it for its "appealing pathos," its "fine dignity of intellectualism," but most of all he had applauded its "astonishing realistic fidelity."

The particular Wednesday they selected for the promised visit happened to be an extremely rainy one. Linwood and Fergusson were Mrs. Forester's only guests. The lady was very gracious, and for some time talked of the weather and of the latest pleasing play. At length she lifted from a near table a copy of Vladimir Karanoff's book. Then she thanked Fergusson, briefly, yet sweetly, for his goodness in having given it so genial a review. After that she handed him with a winning grace a certain evening newspaper.

"Pray read this horrid letter in the last number of the *Sentinel*, Mr. Fergusson. How unkind to print it from their angry correspondent. Don't you think so?"

Fergusson cast his eye on the column to which her delicate finger pointed. Linwood rose and slipped into the shadow at the further end of the room.

Presently Fergusson's face grew livid. The paper dropped from his hands. As he stared at Mrs. Forester, she said, in her dulcet voice, with her graceful head leaned a little sideways and the open novel in her hand:

"You see, Mr. Fergusson, you *have* made a mistake. There is no such person as Vladimir Karanoff. And you took those Russian words quite for granted, you know. For instance, when 'Liza's robes diffused, as she moved, a faint fragrance of, *et cetera*,' the word which follows is the Russian word for onion."

"Good heavens!" broke from Fergusson.

"And here, on page 10, when the gentle Katrina stirs the contents of her cup, at breakfast time, in sombre reverie, it—er—isn't *coffee* she's drinking; it's *raw rum*."

"Ugh!" broke from Fergusson.

"And on page 19, when you think Dimitoi gets into his carriage, what he does really get into is a washtub, drawn by donkeys. And on page 21, if you will permit me——"

But Mr. Fergusson had rushed from the drawing-room of Mrs. Forester. That night he scarcely slept a wink, and appeared haggard next morning at the office of the *Umpire*.

Linwood greeted him with a dreamy smile. "How you darted away yesterday afternoon, Jack! I hope you didn't find Mrs. Forester an unpleasant hostess."

"Oh, come, Bob Linwood," shot from the tortured young man. "I should say this joke had gone far enough."

The quizzical twinkle in Linwood's eyes faded. "Do you mean your joke about posing as so mighty an admirer of writers whose countries and the manners and customs of whose people you know almost nothing? Do you mean the joke of trying to strangle and crush every honest literary effort made by your own countryfolk? Because, if you do, Jack, I quite agree with you that such joke *has* gone far enough."

"I'm glad," fumed Fergusson, "that you like a woman of Mrs. Forester's kind! A woman who would stoop to such deceit, such treachery, such——"

"An extremely clever process of boxing your ears, my boy, and pulling your nose. . . . And, besides," Linwood went on in his cool, listless way, "please oblige me by not insulting Mrs. Forester any more than you can *help*, for I have to ask for your congratulation on our engagement."

PEARSON'S PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTFOLIO
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Each picture is accompanied by a careful biography or description, and, indeed, the whole work is the finest production lovers of sport have ever had placed before them

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MR. STEPHEN PRIDDY.

MR. WALTER MIDDLETON sat in portly grandeur, gazing forth upon the neat little garden of his suburban villa. He was one of those regular City men who, as Dickens observed, can be said to have no recreation beyond his dinner, if it is not his garden.

Mr. Middleton fulfilled the type to a nicety; he never sullied his own bejeweled hands with the soil of his tastefully arranged half-acre, yet his shrubs were quite a personal matter, and had he by some wonderful feat of horticulture practically created fresh species of flowers, he could not have been more sensitive upon the subject than of the little inoffensive pansies and primroses which bloomed in the large central bed.

But then, to be sure, Mr. Walter Middleton was sprung from a nation which more than two centuries before had been convulsed by an almost incredible tulip mania.

Mr. Middleton had dined. Business had been pretty good, and the bulls, of which large, hornless herd he was a mild specimen, had succeeded beyond expectation in their speculative dabblings. He was, therefore, in a more than usually complacent mood. The sun was setting, and the motionless shrubs and bushes threw their elongated shadows upon the close-cropped grass.

Mr. Middleton's wife and daughter had gone to the theatre, and the City man had been dining alone. He was lazily following with his half-closed eyes the wreaths of cigar smoke which floated out through the open French window, when a rap fell upon the door of the room.

"Come in," said Mr. Middleton, still following the dissolving smoke with his sleepy gaze.

A maid-servant entered.

"If you please, sir, there's a person out in the passage as would like to speak to you in private; and please, sir, he says it's very perticular."

"What do you call a person?" inquired Mr. Middleton with dignity.

"A man, sir, with rather a dirty face, and dressed in nasty old clothes."

"Ah! some beggar, I suppose. Well, tell him I'm engaged."

The girl disappeared, but a moment later returned.

"Please, sir, he says it would be a matter of much regret to you if you was to refuse to see him. I don't think he's a beggar, sir; he don't talk like one."

Mr. Middleton reflected for a moment with a stolid expression upon his imperturbable countenance.

"Show him in here," said he. "Never mind about clearing away the cloth."

A moment later the man entered. He was a tall, seedy-looking individual, with hollow cheeks, ill-kempt hair, dressed in a rusty brown suit, holding a battered beaver hat in one hand and dangling a solitary glove between the finger and thumb of the other. Mr. Middleton propped himself up on his elbows whilst he gazed at his visitor for a moment, then, with a little grunt, let his ponderous form sink back into the luxurious arm-chair in which he was sitting.

The man advanced with a smirk upon his grimy countenance furtively gazing at the dessert upon the table. He had to come quite close to the City man before he could see his face, for that gentleman sat right in front of the French window, staring straight ahead of him, and studying the topography of his garden by the twilight.

"You are the owner of this house, sir, I believe?" said the seedy-looking man, stuffing his one glove into his trousers-pocket.

Mr. Middleton looked at him with a phlegmatic stare of indignation, and said in his deep voice:

"What right have you to ask——"

The seedy man waved his hand.

"Oh!" cried he, "I beg you will not question my right, Mr. Middleton. I think I shall soon establish that to your satisfaction. I am not asking questions from curiosity. Is this your house, sir?"

The fat City man twisted himself into a less comfortable attitude—a sure sign of uneasiness.

"Well, yes," said he, inspecting the ash of his cigar; "if you *must* know, this *is* my house. What then, sir?"

"You tell me it is your absolute property?" said the seedy man, setting his hat down upon the floor and fumbling in his waistcoat pocket. "And the garden?"

"Ah! my garden! What the dickens can you want to know that for?"

"You will very soon find out, sir," said the man, who was a very cool kind of customer, producing a piece of pasteboard as he spoke, and thrusting it into the City man's hand. "That is my name, sir," and he bowed whilst Mr. Middleton gazed at the card.

"Mr. Stephen Priddy," he muttered.

That was all; there was no address.

"Now come, Mr. Middleton," said Mr. Priddy, helping himself to a chair, and drawing it very close to the other's arm-chair, "I may as well at once inform you that I am here on important business, and furthermore that this important business will be greatly to your advantage."

Mr. Middleton expelled a great cloud of smoke into his visitor's face, and in his deep voice said:

"Well!"

"Do you know who lived in this house twenty years ago?" continued Mr. Priddy, waving off the bluish wreaths with his hand.

The City man slowly shook his head.

"Very well, sir; *I* do. Never mind names just at present. Let it suffice for me to tell you that she was an old lady—a connection of mine—and that she was very rich."

The seedy man uttered these last words very emphatically, staring hard meanwhile at Mr. Middleton. That stolid worthy merely again ejaculated, "Well!"

"This is your property *now*," cried Mr. Priddy, with a sudden air of earnestness, "and, therefore, any treasure"—he paused a moment, then continued—"any treasure that might be hidden upon it must be also yours."

For the first time since the seedy man's entrance Mr. Middleton regarded him with attention. He twisted quite round in his chair in order to obtain a good view of him, and after regarding him for at least two minutes in silence, said:

"What do you mean?"

Mr. Priddy rose and stepped to the French window.

"That garden," said he, pointing; "you have little idea what is concealed beneath the surface of it, sir, in the particular spot upon which my eye is at this moment resting. Briefly, I will tell you the story. Twenty years ago a lady lived here. She was a very nervous old body, and there came the news one evening as I was sitting with her that the house next door had been robbed. That very day she had drawn a very large sum of money out of the bank, and this report of burglars scared her horribly.

"You know what old ladies are, sir. She fancied the mere having of so much money in the house would attract thieves as cheese attracts mice. She became so nervous that she declared

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that she could not go to bed with all that gold in the safe downstairs. I was staying with her, for, as I have said, she was a connection of mine; and merely by way of pacifying the poor old soul I suggested burying the gold in the garden for the night. She jumped at the idea, and begged me to carry it out. Accordingly, I produced an empty box, placed the bag of money in it, dug a hole in the soil, and hid it. The old lady then went calmly to bed, but when next morning came she was discovered dead—stone dead, sir. Heart disease, the doctors called it. Well, this was a pretty considerable shock to me, as you may suppose, and drove all recollection of the buried money clean out of my head for the time being. All the relatives came flocking into the house like so many carrion, Mr. Middleton."

The seedy man tried to infuse an expression of disgust into his voice, and paused whilst he stared into the stolid and attentive countenance of the City gentleman.

"Well, sir," he continued, "it happened, owing to circumstances which I cannot very precisely recall now, it being, as you see, twenty years ago since the thing happened, that I was obliged to leave this house on the day following the decease of my old lady relative. I went away, still forgetting all about the money that I had buried. I am not going to detain you, sir, by an account of how I have been knocking about the world ever since," and here Mr. Priddy glanced over his seedy person. "My motive in calling this evening is just to inform you that the money still lies hidden where I buried it with my own hands twenty years ago. It is yours now, sir, alas! this old house is, too;" and the dirty-faced man threw what was intended to be a pathetic glance round the room, his eyes lingering long upon the dinner table.

"Why," said Mr. Middleton, an expression of perplexity coming into his stolid countenance, "I don't know what to say. How do I know you are not a swindler, for instance?" and Mr. Middleton tried to force a very knowing scowl.

"Oh, as to that," replied Mr. Priddy, with a superior smile, "give me a shovel and I will reassure you at once!"

"Good!" replied the City gentleman, rising. "There is still light to see by. Lead the way, sir."

"Hold! The bargain!" said the seedy man, picking up his hat and halting upon the threshold. "If the money is there, I take half. Is that fair?"

"It will be quite fair if the money *is* there," said Mr. Middleton, incredulously, stepping on to the lawn, and grasping the polished handle of a spade which leaned against the verandah.

Mr. Priddy took the shovel, and, carrying it in his hand, walked straight to the large, oval plot in the middle of the grass, pausing to gaze about him when he arrived on the edge of it as though to get his correct bearings. Mr. Middleton followed, forgetful even of his favourite flowers in the curiosity that was slowly over-mastering the sluggishness of his intellect.

Mr. Priddy then fell to digging. The earth was moist, and the large brown sods were easily turned. The seedy man worked hard, his shovel struck with rapid blows into the ground, and the scattered soil pattered like hail upon glass. Mr. Middleton, regardless of the flying mould, drew to the edge of the plot, and stood staring with expectant gaze down into the slowly deepening hole.

Suddenly the blade of the shovel smote something hard, and there was a slight sound of the splintering of wood. Mr. Priddy redoubled his efforts without a word; Mr. Middleton gave a deep "Ah!" In another moment a small, square box was disclosed to view, the wood of it discoloured almost to the hue of the clay soil which still adhered in lumps to it. Mr. Priddy stooped and raised it; then, holding it between his knees, he fell, all very deliberately, to replacing the mould in the hole.

"For goodness sake!" cried Mr. Middleton, fairly overcome with excitement, "let us go into the house and divide. Never mind the hole. The money, man—the money!"

"As you please, sir," said the seedy-looking individual coolly; and, throwing the shovel down upon the grass, he led the way back into the dining-room.

The City man, with a trembling hand, lighted the gas. Mr. Priddy took up the doormat, and very carefully deposited the befouled box upon it. The shovel had shattered the fragile lid, and with the aid of a carving-knife he speedily prised open the splintered fragments. Then, putting in his hand, he drew forth a small, red canvas bag, nearly round in shape, and tightly bound with a cord at the mouth.

"Cut it!" cried the portly City gentleman, thrusting a knife into Mr. Priddy's hand, when that worthy had been calmly trying to undo the knot for about three minutes.

"I trust you are no longer inclined to question the motive of my visit?" said the seedy man, passing the keen blade through the string.

"Oh, hang it, no! There, open it, do! Ah!"

A large heap of glittering gold rolled out upon the snowy tablecloth as Mr. Priddy turned the canvas bag upside down. Both men stood regarding it for a moment in silence, then Mr. Priddy fell to counting.

"Ah, that's right," said Mr. Middleton. "See how much we have here."

"One hundred pounds!" announced Mr. Priddy, after a long interval of silence.

"My friend, you have behaved like a true gentleman. The money was all within your grasp, yet you chose to say, 'No! it belongs to the owner of the house!' Give me your hand, Mr. Priddy."

They shook in silence.

"And now let us divide," continued the City man.

"Stay! One little favour, Mr. Middleton. Fifty pounds in gold is no light weight to lug to the other end of London. Would you give me paper for the amount—your cheque or notes?"

"With pleasure," replied Mr. Middleton, and going to a desk he unlocked it, drew forth a cheque-book, and, filling in a cheque for the amount, handed it to the seedy man, who, with the greatest *sang-froid* imaginable, placed it in the breast-pocket of his shabby jacket.

The two men sat awhile smoking and chatting, and then Mr. Priddy took his leave and departed.

. . . . . .

Half-an-hour later a vague suspicion slowly formed in Mr. Middleton's saturnine mind. He rose and went to his desk from which he laboriously drew forth the red canvas bag containing the windfall. This he emptied on the floor, and taking coins from the heap at random, he sounded them upon the table. They all fell dead as lead.

"THE TENTH OF JUNE"

is the title of the new serial tale which will commence in the next number of SHORT STORIES. The author, Mr. John K. Leys, asserts that, in point of interest and exciting incident, this, his most recent production, entirely eclipses all his previous romances, a statement which those readers of SHORT STORIES who are wise enough to follow the story from week to week will enthusiastically bear out.

Broadly speaking, the plot deals with the adventures of Geoffrey Dundas and others living in England in their attempts to avoid assassination by certain Hindoos who are under oath to wipe from the face of the earth all those Englishmen and their offspring concerned in an act of indignity against some Indian gods, perpetrated during the Indian Mutiny, on the tenth of June, 1853.

It treats of the extreme measures to which the hero and his friends concerned have to go in order to insure their safety each tenth of June, and with the narrow escapes and hand-to-hand fights necessarily resulting from the attempted assassinations. The marvellous manner in which the Hindoos contrive to live in the very heart of the metropolis, and in the most open parts of the country, without exciting suspicion, and always avoiding capture, is not the least interesting feature of the story. Their native craft and subtle cunning is evinced in all their actions, and is pitted against the cool judgment and courage of the young Englishman.

The story throughout will be embellished with striking and powerful illustrations by Mr. Raymond Potter, whose ability in this direction is already known to the readers of *Pearson's Library* and *Pearson's Weekly*.

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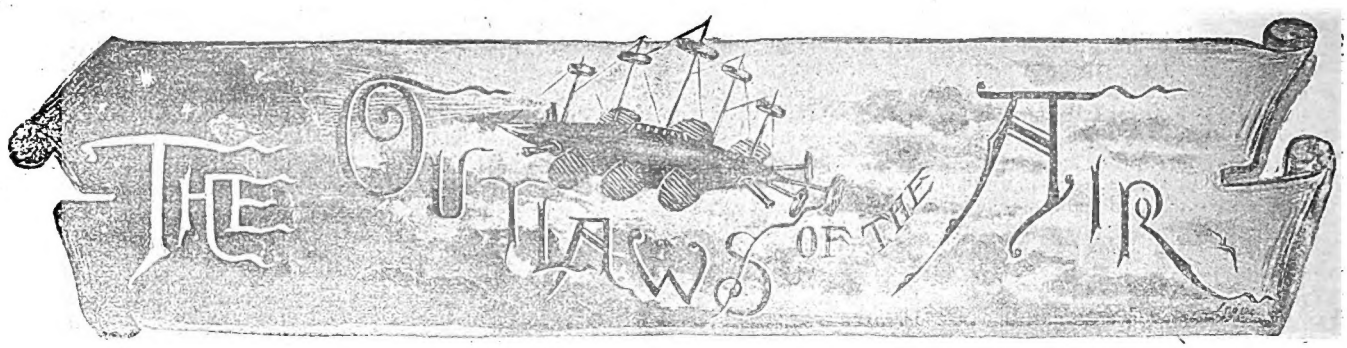

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

CHAPTER LIII.

Wolves at Bay.

Three days after the meeting of the Directors of the Syndicate at Sir Harry's house in Grosvenor Place, soon after eight o'clock on a lovely summer morning, the news ran like wildfire through London that a large fleet of air-ships flying the Union Jack and another flag, on which were emblazoned in gold and white background two winged hands grasping each other, had dropped to the ground in the middle of Hyde Park.

Almost immediately ever-growing streams of people began to move towards the Park. Omnibuses full of men going to the City converged instead towards the Marble Arch and Hyde Park Corner, and there were promptly emptied by common consent. Business for the present was left to take care of itself, for rapidly succeeding rumours filled the air, and it soon became known that the much-abused and misunderstood Aerial Navigation Syndicate had been quietly and skilfully working for the best all the time, and had at last emerged from its secrecy and retirement with a fleet of air-ships powerful enough to meet the still dreaded Anarchists in their own element, and hunt them from the skies in which they had too long reigned supreme.

What the immediate destination of the fleet was no one knew, and no one seemed to care much to know. Everyone was satisfied for the time being to see the aerial cruisers there, resting quietly on British soil and flying the British flag. The Chairman and Directors of the Syndicate made, perforce, a triumphal progress through the cheering throngs that lined the way from Grosvenor Place to where the air-ships were lying, guarded by a strong body of police and lancers, and when at last at the firing of a gun the whole fleet of twenty-eight vessels rose at the same instant from the ground and soared away up into the blue cloudless sky, it was followed by such a roaring cheer of delighted enthusiasm as London had never heard before.

The Union Jack and another flag

At a height of a thousand feet the fleet separated into two squadrons, led by the *War-Hawk* and the *Volante*, and then, with a parting salvo of aerial artillery, they sped away to the southward, and in a few minutes were lost to the admiring gaze of the almost frantically delighted populace.

A flight of five hours brought them in sight of the Central Cantabrian chain crowned by the rocky summit of Mount Pietra. Signals were now flown from the two flagships, and the two squadrons separated, the one flying to the westward and the other to the eastward, and rising in long upward curves until a height of ten thousand feet had been reached. Then they converged again, with the mountain between them.

A few minutes later those on watch in their conning-towers could distinctly make out with their glasses the dark oval of the gorge to the north of the peak in which Berthauld had told the leaders of the expedition they would find the Camp of the Outlaws of the Air. That his information had been accurate and faithfully given very soon became manifest, for at the moment of their arrival over the gorge five air-ships rose out of it and attempted to scatter and escape underneath them, but before they had flown a thousand yards a converging hail of shells and Maxim bullets was rained down upon them from every ship in the two squadrons.

Three blew up and vanished in a brilliant outburst of flame, and with a shock that shook the atmosphere, and the other two, riddled and crippled, dropped to the earth like birds stricken on the wing, and were dashed to fragments on the rocks beneath. Then the squadrons halted, poised over the gorge, at the bottom of which about a score more air-ships could be seen resting. They waited for a good ten minutes, but not one of these made an attempt to rise.

"Those fellows are helpless," said Mr. Maxim, who was standing in the conning-tower of the *Volante* with Adams. "They've got no fuel and they can't rise. You may depend upon it that all the fuel they had left they put into those five ships we've sent to glory. That was their forlorn hope, and they've been fools enough to let us catch them like rats in a trap."

"Yes," said Adams, "I suppose that's it. They had no idea that anyone knew anything about this place, and really if it hadn't been for Berthauld we might have hunted the world over for years before we'd found it. Well, we must clear them out of there now we have got them, but we mustn't destroy those ships, they are too useful for that, and they are worth a fight to get hold of."

More signals were then exchanged between the flag-ships and the squadrons, and presently the *War-Hawk* and the *Volante*, each accompanied by three ships, sank slowly down towards the gorge, while the remainder kept guard in two great semicircles above. When they were on a level with the encircling rocks, the six ships ranged themselves three on either side, commanding the whole of the valley with their shell guns and

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Maxims, while the *War Hawk* and the *Volante* sank down in the centre, and stopped a hundred feet from the ground just clear of their consorts' line of fire.

On one bank of the stream that ran down through the gorge stood an irregular group of between forty and fifty half-starved and woe-begone looking wretches, the last remnant of the lately terrible Outlaws of the Air. Mr. Maxim had been correct in his opinion. The five air-ships that had been destroyed had contained all that was left of the motor fuel in the Camp. All the men that they would carry had crowded into them, ruthlessly shooting down those who had disputed the last chance of escape with them, and whose corpses now lay scattered about the space they had risen from.

But the fate of the five ships had apparently utterly demoralised those who were left in the gorge, for when Sir Harry hailed them in French, and asked them whether they preferred surrender or shooting down where they stood, they threw up their unarmed hands, and one of them shouted back:

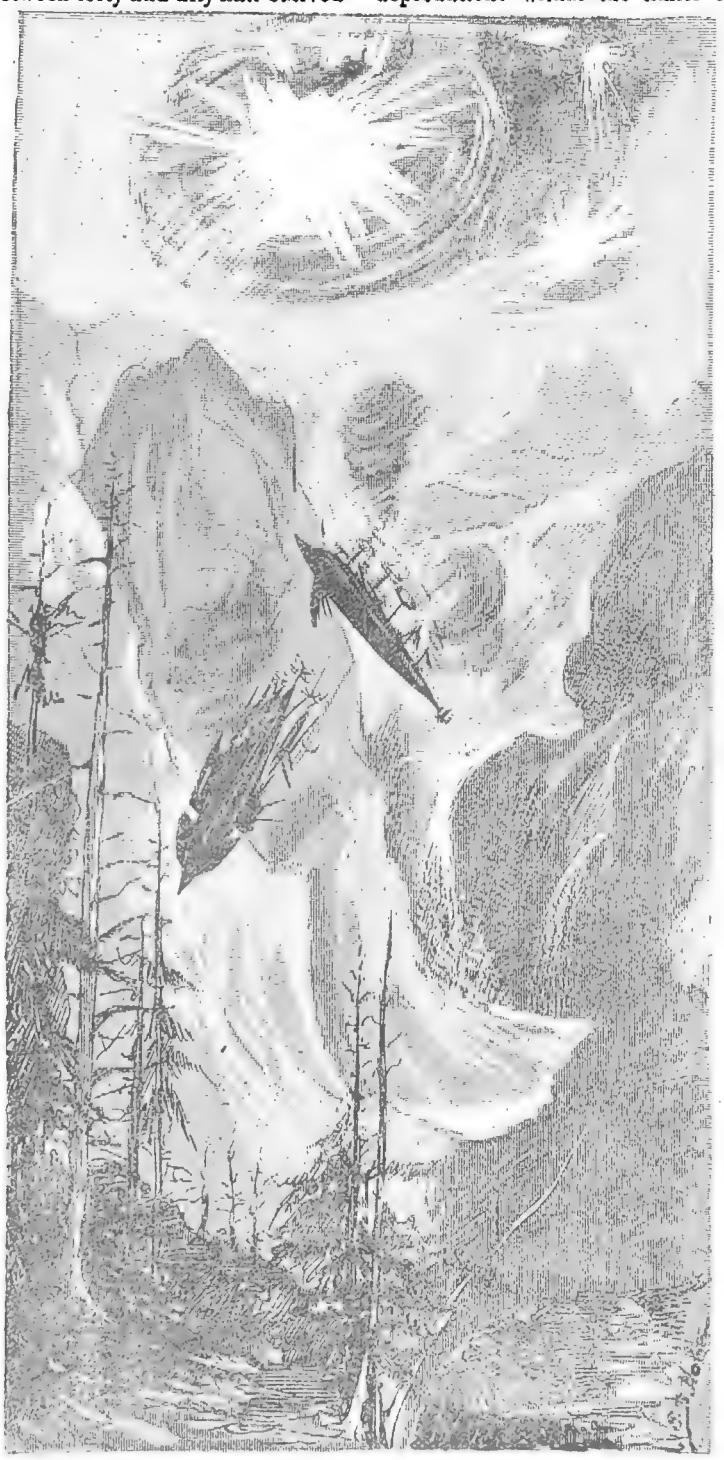
"Yes, we surrender if you will give us our lives."

"I can't promise that," he replied. "All I can promise is a fair trial and English justice."

"Will you promise to take us to England?"

"Yes, if you will surrender quietly, and if there is no treachery. If there is any, not one of you shall escape alive. If a shot is fired, either from those huts or the ships, you shall be shot down where you stand, every man of you. Now put your hands above your heads and keep them there."

Every hand went up as he spoke, and the two air-ships dropped to the ground, one on either side of the group, so keeping the Anarchists between the cross-fire of six Maxims. Three men from each vessel landed, and, taking the Anarchists one by one, bound their arms behind them, the others being compelled to keep their hands up until their turn came.



Dropped to the earth like birds stricken on the wing.

None of them made the slightest resistance, for they had chosen cunningly and well. Resistance meant nothing but certain death; but English justice was an unknown quantity, and might offer more than one loophole of escape to them, as it had done to many others of their evil kind. As a matter of fact, it may as well be said at once that a very clever Old Bailey barrister who was retained for their defence, and actually paid with stolen money, made out the impossibility of identification of the prisoners with those who had committed depredations within the limits of English jurisdiction, that everyone in court, from the judge to the warders, felt certain that a verdict of "Guilty" was almost impossible.

Of course, it was a moral certainty that they had manned the fleet which half destroyed Newcastle, just as it was that they had committed the outrages that had terrorised Europe; but moral certainty is one thing and legal certainty another, and all that the judge in his summing-up could do was to dwell upon the fact that they had been caught in the Anarchist Camp in possession of the air-ships. Berthauld, unhappily, had been employed chiefly on the transport *Voyageur*, and had not been present at the Newcastle tragedy, so that he was unable to swear positively that the prisoners were there

The case for the prosecution looked very weak when the judge had finished his admirably impartial summing-up; but for once, at least, twelve jurymen declined to be fooled by legal technicalities and forensic trickery. They did not even leave the box; they consulted for two or three minutes, and then the foreman stood up, and, in answer to the charge of the clerk as to whether they found all or any of the prisoners guilty of murder and arson on the high seas or within the limits of the British jurisdiction, he replied, to the relief and delight of every one but the prisoners:

"We find them all guilty.'

And so in due course Justice was done in spite of Law.

While the Anarchists were being secured two other ships landed in the gorge, and a complete search was made of all the huts and air-ships for men or explosives that might have been concealed with a view to treachery. Nothing, however, was found except in the regular magazines of the air-ships, which were nearly full. Hardly any food or drink was found in the camp—a fact which proved that the outlaws had been reduced by the desertion of the *Revanche* almost to extremity.

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The captives were distributed amongst their own ships and those of the Syndicate's squadron, and six hours after the first and only attack had been made, the united fleets, now numbering forty-eight vessels, mounted into the air in two divisions, and within six hours more the remnant of the Outlaws of the Air had been safely lodged in Pentonville Prison under lock and key and a special guard of military and police.

CHAPTER LIV

The Ultimatum

For a fortnight the Directors and officers of the Syndicate were busily engaged in refitting the captured vessels with new guns and stores, and getting their new crews accustomed to them and their machinery, which was slightly different to that which propelled their own ships.

This period was signalised by at least two important events. The first was the unexpected appearance at dawn one morning, in Southampton Water, of the *Nautilus*, which had sailed under sealed orders the day after the success of Dr. Roberts' experiment. Behind her floated, peaceful and harmless at last, the long-dreaded *Destroyer*, once the terror of the Atlantic, and now the latest addition to the British Navy.

She had been sighted by a North German Lloyd boat chasing a French mail-ship bound for Buenos Ayres, and reported. Lieutenant Wyndham found that his sealed orders were to run her down and sink or capture her, whatever time it took to do so. By a stroke of great good luck he ran across her in three days, a little south of the Transatlantic track. The *Destroyer* at once gave chase, and the *Nautilus* went about and ran for it, always keeping just five miles ahead, until at last it dawned upon the pirates that the *Destroyer* had at last met a vessel faster than herself.

This they knew could be nothing but the terrible *Nautilus;* and so, after keeping the chase up all day, they doubled at nightfall and ran in the opposite direction. But this was exactly what Wyndham had expected; and the *Nautilus*, instead of being five miles away, as the pirates thought, was only three-quarters of a mile, so that the moment she turned she was seen in the clear summer night.

"*We find them all guilty.*"

Then the searchlight of the *Nautilus* flashed out, and, after having wasted nearly half of their rapidly diminishing stock of fuel, as Wyndham had intended they should do, the pursuers became the pursued. Day dawned, and found the remorseless *Nautilus* still travelling at exactly the same speed as her prey, and exactly four miles astern of her.

All day the chase continued, the two vessels flying through the water at nearly forty knots an hour; but towards evening the speed of the *Destroyer* began to slacken. The *Nautilus* slowed down too, always keeping her four-mile distance, until at length the last pound of fuel had been burnt on board the *Destroyer* and she came to a dead stop.

This happened within about eighty miles of the steamship track between New York and the Channel, and here Wyndham knew he would be certain to pick up a British steamer on patrol duty, so, leaving the helpless *Destroyer* where she lay, he ran North at full speed, flashing the private

Hurling up a gigantic mass of foaming water.

signal all the way until it was answered from a British war-ship, which he found to be the *Ariadne*, a twenty-two knot cruiser on the Atlantic station.

He reported what he had done, gave exact directions as to the position of the *Destroyer*, and then sped away to mount guard over her until the cruiser arrived. When she at length did so the pirates were given their choice between being blown out of the water or surrender. They replied with a shot from their forty-pounder, which drilled a clean hole through the cruiser's unarmoured bows. Then Wyndham, training one of his guns, dropped a five hundred-pound dynamite cartridge with a time-fuse attached into the water about twenty yards from the *Destroyer*.

It burst well under the surface, hurling up a gigantic mass of foaming water high into the air, and this, falling back with frightful force, deluged the pirate craft with tons of water and left her helpless and half sinking, with every man on board her either drowned or maimed. The hint proved quite sufficient. The red flag came slowly down at last and a white one took its place. Then the *Ariadne* lowered her pinnace, and the terror of the Atlantic was ignominiously taken possession of without a struggle, to be towed back to England in triumph by her captor.

The second event was the despatch of the ultimatum of the Aerial Navigation Syndicate to the Tsar of Russia and the President of the French Republic at noon on the day on which the whole fleet was pronounced fit for service. The two copies were delivered simultaneously in Paris and St. Petersburg by air-ships flying flags of truce.

(*This fascinating story will be concluded in our next week's issue, and in the same issue will be commenced a serial story by John K. Leys which will rival in interest* The Outlaws of the Air. *For further particulars see page* 567.)

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Lost on Green Lake Mountain.

THE two had left the rest of the party, with the guides and burros, at the rude little half-way house by the tiny lake that lay like an oblong emerald in a setting of bronze, and had wandered away by themselves, the brown-bearded young Western mining engineer and she, the delicate-looking visitor from Boston, with her creole hair and eyes.

The benediction of a perfect Indian summer afternoon lay upon the scene. The cloudless sky, so blue that it reminded her of the exquisite colouring of the violets at home; the air so still that even the trembling of the aspen leaves ceased at intervals; the haze about the mountain top like a golden fog. It was an afternoon that made one forget there were ever extremes of temperature, or that the sunbeams must soon sink into the west.

They had sauntered some time, and Madge was tired, for the way had been rough. She did not realise the time nor the distance they had wandered; she only knew that to her the whole thing was a wonderful dream.

Bob's thoughts were different. A perfect Colorado afternoon was not new to him, while his love for Madge was; and his pleasure came from her keen and placid enjoyment. It was no accident on his part that they were separated from the rest, and he realised fully that they had been gone over an hour, and were a long distance from the lake.

His happiness lay in being alone with her, in watching the surprise and pleasure rippling over her face, as new shapes and new landscapes opened upon her, in answering the childlike questions that fell from the dark eyes and pretty lips; and, more than all, in the thrilling touch of the slender arms, and the soft warm hands, as he helped her over the rough places. It was heaven to him, and could not last long enough.

At last she gave a weary sigh, and sat down upon a convenient log as they reached a level stretch, saying, "Oh, dear! I am so tired!"

"I think perhaps we've gone far enough," he responded quickly. "It's getting on in the afternoon, and time to start back."

"Are we very far from them?" she asked suddenly, seeming to realise for the first time that they might be.

"About a mile, I should say; but I really have not kept much track of the distance, and this part of the trail is rather new to me."

After this there was silence for some time. He saw that she was quite exhausted, and it occurred to him that the altitude was having some effect upon her.

He blamed himself inwardly for his thoughtlessness, and was about to ask her if she had trouble in breathing when a sudden chill in the atmosphere, accompanied by a movement of the air that set the aspens shivering violently, followed by a gradual dimming of the sunshine, caused them both to glance towards the sun.

What appeared to Madge like a fog was hurrying across it, and rapidly growing denser; and as she looked up towards the highest point visible in the west she could see the grey, mist-like substance stealing in between the rocks and pines, and sweeping silently down towards them.

He answered her look of interrogation by saying, somewhat absent-mindedly, "Clouds. A change of weather! I might have known that the heat this afternoon meant something, if I hadn't been thinking of——"

He stopped abruptly and coloured; but she had turned, and was absorbed in the curious transformation that was going on, and lost his last low-spoken words.

The grey column had completely obscured the sun and was moving towards them.

They both shivered, and he sprang to his feet.

"As soon as you are rested, Miss Chamberlain, I think we had better start back. It looks as though we might have a squall, and perhaps some snow. This is one of the changes common here at this season of the year. It is my fault though, for you know nothing of these changes, of course."

She had risen, and started to speak.

"Don't you breathe easily?" he continued, with some concern, noticing that she pressed her hand to her bosom.

She had paled a little, and now gasped two or three times before she answered, with a smile, "It seems as though I couldn't get enough air in my lungs. I have felt it several times this afternoon. It's trifling," she went on, reassuringly. "I will take your arm though, please, because I am really very tired."

After they had walked a short distance, she continued, shivering, "What a heavy fog, and how damp it is."

"You could hardly call it fog," he said. "We are in a cloud, and it is an unusually thick one," he added, after a pause, glancing about nervously.

The great grey mass had caught them now, and had closed in upon them on every side—beneath them, above them, around them, pressing against their faces, and brushing their hands with its cold, clammy fingers, leaving moisture and chill with every touch.

There was no fear in Madge's mind. Why should there be? They were only a short distance from the hotel—a mile or so, perhaps. One could almost hear a shout so far. Then, she was leaning upon a strong arm, and enjoyed the sensation of being in the midst of a cloud as she enjoyed everything that was new.

"Why, see!" she exclaimed brightly, "it's so thick one can almost grasp a handful! Oh, dear me! I can see it pass between me and your hat," she laughed, as she threw her head to one side and glanced upwards. "And see the moisture on your coat!" she went on, running her hand along his arm, and flipping the water from her fingers.

Bob's eyes were fixed in front, and while she was wondering why he did not answer and appeared so quiet, a sudden gust of wind tore her hat from her head, and in an instant whirled it out of sight into the all-surrounding vapour.

"Stand quite still," he said quickly, and hurried after it.

How odd it was to be there all alone. There was something so solemn, so awful in the silence, the isolation, and the sombreness of the place! To be able to see and feel nothing save the rocks at her feet, and the noiseless mist floating by, to hear nothing but the moaning of the wind, to realise that she might be within a few feet of a precipice and not know it.

Madge shuddered, and there must have been something in the look that she turned upon Bob, who appeared out of the gloom at her side so suddenly and noiselessly as to startle her, that showed the relief she felt in having him with her again. His face, that was set and serious, softened into a reassuring smile, and the swift, eager glance of the eyes that she had noticed once before during the afternoon might have warned her that he, at least, was on dangerous ground. But it only caused a strange little fluttering of her heart, as she replaced her hat and took his arm without a word.

In silence they traversed now what seemed to Madge a long distance. It was but a short time since the change had taken place, but already the wind had risen to a gale, and the gloom deepened into a black wall around them, while in the

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distance could be heard the roar, and rattle, and crash of the approaching storm that was already heralded by a few wandering flakes of snow, whirled along too fast to find a resting-place.

Their pace had unconsciously slackened, and now they were simply groping their way over the logs and stumps, dodging the boulders, and between the swaying pines that arose one after another through the mist like a straggling column of retreating soldiers, when suddenly Bob uttered a surprised exclamation, and stood still.

Not five feet in front of them arose a solid wall of perpendicular rock, its boundaries lost in the mist.

Madge's glance showed her the perplexity, anxiety, and irritation in Bob's gaze, and made her ask earnestly,

"Why, Mr. Bartlett, have you lost your way?"

The only answer was a jagged, quivering glare that seemed to envelope them from every side, brightening up the scarped cliff in front, and showing them upon its surface the cold, dank tufts of dark green moss, between which the moisture was slowly trickling to the base. The very earth under them trembled, the air recoiled in terror, and the mountain seemed to split to its base with the almost simultaneous crash that followed.

The storm had overtaken them!

Madge tried to smile after she had relinquished her hysterical grasp of Bob's arm; but there was no answering smile from him, and a vague fear swept over her.

"I don't recognise this rock," he muttered in a low tone. "I seem to have lost the trail. Let us work our way carefully along the face of this a little."

Once more the slow and hesitating march was resumed. The fluttering flakes of snow had changed to tiny hailstones that were rapidly whitening the ground.

The first grand rush of the wind was over, and it had quieted down into a sullen moan that was merely an undertone to the great orchestra of heaven, whose reverberating notes were ringing from peak to peak, and rolling majestically down the valleys.

Faster and faster beat the hail, now rapidly changing back to snow; colder and colder moaned the wind as they drearily picked their way along in the shadow of the dreary cliff.

Madge shivered perceptibly, and Bob, turning quickly, tore off his coat, and with a peremptory "Put it on, please," threw it over her shoulders and buttoned it round her neck.

She felt by this time that they were in danger. It was growing very cold and snowing heavily, but such a combination was not new to her, although she was rather lightly dressed. And what if they had temporarily lost their way? The storm would soon be over, if they didn't find the trail before then. She might catch a bad cold. And that would have been the extent of her anxiety if it had not been for her companion's actions.

Madge had never before seen Mr. Bartlett so quiet and preoccupied. He seemed to avoid looking at her—which was certainly very unusual for him. His almost constant smile was gone and his mouth firmly set. He seemed to be watching and listening like an animal who knows there are enemies ahead. If he would only talk to her it would remove this uneasiness.

She could stand it no longer, and she asked, "Is there much danger, do you think?"

He did not turn his head, but answered with deliberation,

"Not at present; but we are certainly lost, and I am afraid we are simply making a circle and returning to the spot we started from. I hope to find the trail again."

"How can you find it when the snow is covering it all up?"

The question came from her impulsively, and she felt sorry the moment she asked it. Poor Bob! He had not deliberately lied to her, but he had not told the whole truth, and she had given utterance to the very question that was in his own mind.

"I think I could easily find my way by landmarks if the cloud would lift," he answered evasively.

She suspected now that he was concealing the truth from her, and her temper and courage rose with the crisis.

She said energetically, "Mr. Bartlett, don't conceal any danger from me. I am entitled to know it. I am not a baby."

He stopped, and turned on her abruptly. Then he said:

"The storm may last two or three hours, the snow get very deep, and the cold intense. I can stand it, because I'm strong; but you—you—" the deep voice was a little uncertain, and the two hands that had involuntarily grasped her arms as he turned, tightened—"you are delicate, you know——"

He did not finish, but before he turned his head away the same look came into his eyes again. There was no mistaking it. He might as well have said in so many words, "I love you!"

Madge's heart gave a great bound, and then there came a rush of tenderness towards the man who would lay down his life to save hers.

His strange mood was all clear to her now, and her own feelings were a revelation that almost shocked her.

The hours she had spent with him were the shortest and sweetest she had ever known. She recalled the sense of security and rest that his voice and presence always gave, the truth and earnestness of his character, his constant watchful devotion to her, which she had overlooked as mere gallantry; his strange conduct that moonlit night on the verandah when she had dropped her engagement ring, and he had first guessed that she was pledged to another.

And it was inevitable that, with the swiftness of thought, she should compare him with that other one in the East, with his boyish face, effeminate manner, and supercilious air of superiority, to whom, in their college days, she had bound herself.

It startled her, for she had never before thought him effeminate or supercilious, and she felt guilty in thinking so now.

These thoughts hurried through her brain as she stood waiting while Bob was endeavouring to discover through the whirling whiteness some landmark. Somehow she could not feel very much alarmed, with him by her side, after all.

She realised now, however, that she was very cold and very faint, and that the pressure about her chest was growing worse. The wind had risen again, and the snow was beating against their faces, as though it wished to blind them.

Bartlett was by nature hopeful, persistent, and pugnacious, with a cool, quick brain in any emergency, but he could hardly see his hand before his face.

The trail had long since been covered, and he was utterly at a loss what direction to take or what to do—except that Miss Chamberlain must be kept moving, if possible, to keep off that deadly chill until help should come or the storm lift.

His own teeth would have been chattering as hers were, but for his indomitable will. He knew that she relied upon him, and did not realise the danger. Would it be better to impress the truth upon her? Would she not rise to the emergency, and fight to the bitter end?

Her action at the moment decided him instantly. She sank upon a log, and was resting her face upon her hands.

He sprang to her, and said with decision:

"Miss Chamberlain, you must not give way like that. We are in great danger, and if we let the cold benumb us we are lost."

Her pleading answer sent a great throb of fear through his heart, for it told him that she was already under the influence of that awful spell which makes the approach of death seem like a delusive dream.

"I am not cold now, but so tired. The storm will soon be over, and they will come for us. Please wait here."

Action was needed now. He had his vest left. Without a word he wrenched that off, lifted her to her feet, unbuttoned the coat that was around her, took it off, forced the vest upon her—not heeding the feeble motion with which she waved it away—fastened it, replaced the coat, and hurried her forward through the storm—anywhere, anywhere—he cared not where.

But they went only a short distance when she tottered, stumbled, and almost fell, clasped her hands to her bosom, and uttered a cry of pain. He put his arm closer round her, her head dropped on his shoulder, and her voice came in a whisper:

"I can hardly breathe. I am too weak to walk. Leave me here, and if you can't get help, save yourself."

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All restraint was gone now. He pressed her close to him with both arms, and kissed her again and again.

"Leave you, Madge, when I brought you here! Leave all I care for on earth! Heaven forgive me for saying so, but I can't help it!"

She drew herself back from him an instant; the colour flamed again into her white face, the big eyes looked full into his, then closed slowly, as she put out her arms like a tired child, and was taken back into his embrace. He bent down closer to catch the words:

"I love you, Robert! There can't be harm in saying it now, with death so near. I was not sure until this afternoon. Kiss me, dear! I am so tired!"

He covered her long dark eyelashes, her cold, pale lips, her moist hair, her marble-like cheeks and forehead with passionate kisses.

Her feeble clasp about his neck strengthened a little, and she smiled gently.

The swirling snow and the wailing wind were nothing to him now. He raised his head, and underneath the joyous triumph in his eyes there was a desperate glitter as he glanced about him.

Death? Who talked of death? They should not die there, like rats in a hole. Life was sweet to him now. She loved him, and she was his by right. Was there no escape from this biting cold and pitiless snow?

He would shout. The wild wind swept his call away with a mocking burst. It was like shouting over the sea.

His voice was almost gone. If he only had his revolver with him, he might make himself heard. Fool! Fool to leave everything behind them that would have been useful! Robbins always carried a revolver. Surely they would try to signal. Hark! What was that? Only the roll of the far-off thunder.

When the storm came up it was from the west, and the wind was blowing towards the lake. Yes, he remembered that. The wind hadn't changed, and all he had to do was to follow it. Why had he not thought of that before? There was hope yet! He would carry her!

He lifted her in his arms and staggered forward a few feet. He had to give it up. His legs and arms were icy cold, and his joints stiff. He must get his blood in circulation first. He would scrape away the snow and place Madge against that shelving rock.

She seemed to be sleeping now. She was protected from the wind there. Now he would warm up a little, and then carry her to the lake. All he had to do was to follow the wind.

Ah, how awkward of him to stumble like that! It must have been a stone that tripped him. What's that? Blood! He must have cut his forehead, then. How hard it was to get up again.

"Oh, well, perhaps he had better lie down, and take a little nap, and then——and then——then——"

The snow had ceased falling, and the wind's dreary monotone died away to a mere whisper amongst the ghost-like pines that stood up stark, like sentinels frozen on duty. The lifted, shifting clouds were pierced here and there by slanting shafts of sunshine that touched the snow with diamond points. Wider and longer grew the blue rifts in the rolling, hurrying, and dissolving mass of clouds, changing from black to grey.

Suddenly, bursting through the ragged fringes of the western curtain, the sinking sun touched with gold the pyramids, towers, minarets, and domes outlined in white relief against the blackness of the swiftly-departing storm-clouds in the east. A rainbow poised on two marble peaks, and, spanning the valley, hung in the eastern sky.

The man slept on in his shirt sleeves, and the woman lay as quietly as though she had never known any other pillow than one of snow. Yet the cold was intense. The branches snapped in the frosty air. The sun had gone and the shadows were settling down upon the valley. It would be night soon.

"Oh, Heaven, Jim, look there!"

Robbins's strong voice was only a whisper.

"That's her, sir! And here he is! Hush! See, and in his shirt-sleeves, too! And there's blood on the snow at his head!"

"What was the signal? Five double shots, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right! Now—one! two! three! four! five! There! Have you got plenty of cartridges?"

"Plenty, sir."

"All right! Now let's turn him over. Heavens, how white he is! Hush! I think I feel a slight beat. Take off his shoes; light a match, quick! Ah, he feels that burn! Thank Heaven! Pour the whiskey down him while I go to her. Hark! They've answered. They are coming! Shout Jim! Poor little girl, I'm afraid we're too late for you! She seems very stiff, and I can't feel any movement of the heart at all. You had a great head, Jim, to think of bringing those burros. We'd had a hard time carrying them back. Better not try to do anything here but give them whiskey. It won't take long to get them to the house, and then we can go to work on them in dead earnest. Ah! there's her sister."

"Is she dead, Mr. Robbins?"

"I hope not, Miss Grace. It will take some time to bring her to, after we get her in bed. Quick—bring that burro here, Mike! Never mind the dress, Miss Grace. We mustn't stand on ceremony. It's a case of life and death! There! Balance her that way. That will take the weight off us, and we can rub her down as we go along."

. . . . . .

Mr. Robbins, manager and principal owner of the great Denver shelter, looked up over his glasses, his coffee, and his paper, at his wife who was busily engaged with pencil and paper on the opposite side of the breakfast table.

"My dear, you remember the two Chamberlain girls who were here last autumn?"

Mrs. Robbins was making out a list for a very select tea-party, and was consequently much pre-occupied.

"Yes, dear, shall I put their names down?"

"No, no, I didn't mean that. They are not here, anyway. By the way, though, I saw them when I was down at the Springs yesterday. But don't you remember it was the little one that was caught in the snowstorm with Bartlett up at Green Lake, and had such a hard pull with pneumonia? And you know we could not understand why they moved her down to the Springs before she was really well, and even before Bartlett got round himself. You thought there was something between her and him, although I told you she was engaged to young Colby, son of Chamberlain's partner. Well, here's a fine storm from Boston this morning about the boy. Listen:

"'A scandal in aristocratic circles, that has been suppressed for several months through the strenuous exertions of the two families interested, came to the surface yesterday, when it was discovered that the son of millionaire Colby, of the well-known firm of Chamberlain and Colby, was married to the variety actress, Annie Lesly, with whom he is now said to be travelling in Europe.

"'Of course, the matter would have been kept quiet, but for the accidental discovery of this marriage by an inquisitive reporter. A sad feature of the affair is that young Colby has been a long time engaged to a daughter of the senior partner, and the wedding day was actually arranged some time since, the postponement being explained on the ground that the young lady's failing health required a sudden return to Colorado Springs, where she is at present.'"

The reading was interrupted at this point by the appearance of a servant with a note for Mr. Robbins, whose puzzled and surprised look gave way gradually to a genial smile, as he perused the nervously written missive, laid it down, took off his glasses, and answered his wife's look of interrogation

"Bartlett asks for a week's leave of absence on personal business. You were right, dear, after all. He has seen the papers this morning, and he will be at the Springs before sundown."

. . . . . .

"We shall have nothing but chrysanthemums for Christmas," the faithful Grace was saying to the invalid wrapped in her pale blue eider gown, lying in a long chair among cushions. "There are hardly flowers enough to go round the churches

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It won't be like home, but you are going to pull through, and that's enough."

"I don't know but I had quite as soon be here as in Boston snowdrifts," Madge returned wearily. "It doesn't matter. Nothing matters any more."

A card was handed in at the door. A wave of shell-like colour swept over the pale face.

"Yes, you may bring him here, Grace. It's something to see anybody we've known before."

Robert Bartlett made short work of his compliments to Miss Grace outside the door, and said other words which sent her downstairs swiftly to the general parlour for the next hour.

In the soft light of the sisters' sitting-room he saw the slender shape among the pillows, hedged by the blossoming chrysanthemums on the low stands at her head. One long dark braid of hair lay over the pillow, with a pale blue ribbon knot at the end.

The star-like eyes under the thick curled fringes said mutely, "Why have you been so long?" and the slight form half raised itself to meet him. He knelt beside her and drew both her hands to his breast. There were no words for such a moment, while eyes questioned eyes, and answered them again with a fulness language knows not. Then he lifted the frail girl gently, tenderly, and she laid her head down on his broad shoulder with a long sigh of absolute rest.

The quick sunset faded, dusk gathered, and the moon came up and tipped the chrysanthemums with silver, but only the flowers knew what few words were said, and the flowers never tell. Only Grace wrote home to her bosom friend as follows:—

"It doesn't matter to her, nothing matters, so long as Robert is with her. She lets him arrange everything. They are to be married Christmas morning, in her room, and her wedding dress will be the long white china silk gown Aunt Diana sent out for her to wear while convalescent, and I believe Robert will have some white roses and jessamine on from Chicago. Of course there wasn't time to get anything suitable for an outfit; but Mrs. Eden, who was married and came out last spring, sent a box of the most beautiful lingerie from her trousseau that she had never worn, which helps one over the responsibility. I don't think Madge cares if she has a new thing or not.

"People who find out what they think of each other on a mountain shelf, in a snowstorm, at the point of freezing to death, are entirely above all lower considerations. I do think three days is a very short time to prepare for any sort of a marriage. But the look that comes in Madge's eyes when I say anything makes me feel queer, and thus you see it won't be Christmas for either of them unless their plans are carried out, and really there is nothing to be said against it—under the circumstances."

And so, under the circumstances, Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett were married on Christmas Day, so that neither storm nor snow could part them.

A COSSACK IN CLAY

THE light in Ruth Westover's studio was failing, for the day was in its decline; still the woman sculptor was hard at work. Nearly all the medallions upon the wall were shrouded in shadow, so that no one could have told which bore the profile of great Cæsar and which the likeness of Cleopatra. Here and there the model of an arm or leg could be seen with startling distinctness, while a number of unfinished statues, which were covered with wet cloths, made the room look like a sepulchre filled with corpses wrapped in their cerements.

There was a stronger light in the centre of the room than in the shrouded corners, and there the sculptor worked with her human model before her. She was a slim girl, with dark hair falling about her temples, and with a spirited and sensitive face. She was working rapidly and nervously, for this was the last sitting she could have from her model, and she was making the best use of her time.

The man who sat scowling before her wore the garb of a Cossack. He was named Sergius Zambrena, and was a man whose life had been extraordinary and tragical. He was broad-shouldered, deep-chested, and brown-bearded. His age was probably thirty-five years. He made a fine model, for he looked as muscular as a Roman athlete. While the girl copied his fine head and face in soft clay, he assumed the terrible aspect of a Cossack in battle. He might have been little better than a fierce savage if his face had been any indication of his real character.

They were rather silent while the sculptor worked; but when she ceased all the assumed ferocity died out of his face, and he took her hands, unmindful of the oil and clay still clinging to them, and forgetful of his own remarkable costume. Even now there was something tragic in his face and bearing.

"I must say good-bye to you," he said. "I will go down to Hoffman's studio and get into my everyday habiliments, and then I must be off. I go on board the steamer to-night, and will be sailing away early to-morrow morning. You cannot forget me while you have that ugly Cossack glowering at you."

"I am sorry you are going." There was a bright scarlet spot on either of her cheeks, and he noticed that the hands he held were feverish. "You have been a good friend to me, and I shall miss you exceedingly. I am beginning to think that real friends are rare, and when I have found one it pains me to lose him."

"We never lose our friends," Zambrena answered fancifully. "We separate from them, and sometimes they die; but I think their friendship is always with us. It is painful for me to go away. I love this town; I love this little studio; it breaks my heart to say good-bye to this little Bohemian sculptor. Yet it is gratifying to be able to go back. I was banished from my country ten years ago, and that banishment has been withdrawn. I am glad to show my enemies that I *can* go back, and I will be glad to receive at least a fragment of the fortune that the Government stole from me when it prohibited me from returning to Russia. Ah, Ruth! banishment is a sad experience. You cannot imagine how inexpressibly sad it is!"

Ruth Westover clasped her fingers tightly behind her, and stood looking up into the face of the man whose great form towered above her. There was a ring of defiance in her voice when she spoke again.

"Banishment from your country would seem to be an impertinence, not a tragedy. I would not be willing to live under a Government that is so barbaric as to use the knout upon delicate women. I could not be subject to a power that denies its people their right of a trial by jury for what are called official offences; and I would hate a country that has a Siberia, with all its legal crimes, for its background. If I had lived in Russia I could not always have bitten my tongue and strangled my speech, and I am afraid I would have been sent to Siberia."

Zambrena laughed with enjoyment of this hot-headed speech.

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"They would have sent you there, as sure as fate," he said, with conviction. "You have a trick of the tongue, Ruth, that would have given you no quarter in Russia. Your blood is too warm for that Government, and you would have been sent to the snow-fields to reduce it to what is considered a proper temperature."

Ruth shuddered, but she answered at once:

"Your blood is no cooler than mine, my friend. You are easily angered, and you hate injustice. Russia is not a good country for these characteristics. Are you quite sure you will come back?"

"Not sure," he said gravely; "but hopeful."

They were silent for a minute, and then he spoke again, rather abruptly:

"We have been the best of friends always, Ruth."

"Yes," she assented; "the best of friends."

He was smiling constrainedly now, and her eyes were dark with unshed tears.

"Your genius is already recognised," he continued; "you have youth, good looks, a manner that captivates and a social position that is assured. From the time you made mud-pies in your infancy you have been approaching success as a sculptor, and now you have gained it. Besides all this, you have won the love of a remarkably good and influential man. Think of this little potter moulding the Prime Minister of a great State just as she models her wax and clay figures! You are too practical not to know that Lord Balflower wants to marry you, Ruth."

"I have imagined something of the kind," she admitted.

"And you will marry him," he said, without looking into her face. "I would not speak of this if I were not going away, and if I did not believe that this may be our last meeting. You always came to me for advice when I was the only friend you had in this town, or I would not talk to you now about so personal a matter. I have watched Balflower, and I know that he is a good man. He is a gentleman, with a generous nature that is sweet without being effeminate. I believe he appreciates the womanliness in your nature as much as he admires the artist. If you marry him you will never have to pinch and economise, nor cook your own breakfast, nor drink out of jelly glasses—and give your visitors marble busts for seats, as you have done in this little studio. You will have an easy life, little Ruth, and I shall be enough your friend to be glad of it."

"Are you glad?" she asked. "Is it your wish that Lord Balflower shall marry me?"

He bent and kissed her forehead.

"Dear friend," he said, "I wish there were no partings in this life. I wish we never need say good-bye."

He went away then, hurriedly—almost abruptly. The sculptor sank into the chair he had occupied and covered her face with her hands.

. . . . . .

Sergius Zambrena had been a friend to Ruth Westover for several years. It was he who had first induced her to open the studio which had subsequently become a delight to them both, and so profitable to her. He was a man of strong character, but was one whom her new acquaintances regarded with distrust, and who, owing to his alleged Socialistic views, they had advised her to avoid.

He had been educated in one of the universities of St. Petersburg, where he had imbibed some of the rebellious spirit against the Russian Government which runs riot among the young men in such institutions. As his family were Loyalists, and, moreover, belonged to the nobility, his sentiments were not readily suspected; but, one night, one of his fellow-students had come to his bachelor quarters and begged for shelter and protection.

The youth had been accused of Nihilism, and was closely pursued by the police. Zambrena knew him to be a careless lad (he was little more than a boy) who gave no heed to political subjects, but who had repeated some of the disloyal sentiments of his mates. If he were caught he would be tried for treason—which meant conviction and death, or the greater punishment of a living burial in the mines.

Zambrena had risked everything that he had held dear in life to save this youth. He had aided and accompanied him in his escape to France. Later, when the facts were suspected, Sergius Zambrena had been banished for being absent from Russia in a foreign country without official permission, and all of his property had been appropriated by the Government as a further punishment for his offence.

After ten years his sentence of banishment had been withdrawn, and he was granted permission to return to his country for a small inheritance to which he had fallen heir.

Ruth Westover reviewed all these circumstances while she sat with covered eyes in her studio after his departure.

"He may never come back," she thought, with exceeding bitterness. "He has many enemies, and it is possible—even probable—they will make some other charge against him that will bring him into trouble. I believe he will never come back."

"I have been blind, stupid, vain," she continued. "I have fancied that he cared for me—that he would not tell me of his affection because he was as poor as I, and because he was afraid that association with a man who had been banished from his country would be a stumbling-block to my success. Now that stigma has been removed from him, and he is even promised a part of his fortune, still he calls me merely a friend, and advises me to make a prudent match with an influential man. Sergius has been called a Socialist, yet he urges me to marry a ruler and an aristocrat. How little women know of the motives and characters of men!"

She arose and approached the figure she had modelled, and which was fast hardening in the cool air of the studio. She looked into its scowling face, and spoke to it as if it could hear her utterances.

"This is the first time you have ever looked into my eyes and frowned, Sergius Zambrena," she said.

. . . . . .

Zambrena left Hoffman's studio, and stood at the street door waiting for a 'bus, and reflecting:

"A man would be a poltroon if he asked a woman to unite her life with his under such circumstances as mine," he thought. "Ruth Westover is an unusual woman—brilliant, successful, and accepted by the best society. I have no right to ask her to go to a country, even temporarily, where she would have no standing, where I will be an object of suspicion, and where danger may assail us both. She will have no Governmental wolves to fear here, and she will know nothing of the real tragedy of my life. I should not suffer like this. I have had hard knocks enough to have made me a philosopher.

His face was very grave and stern.

"And I advised her to marry Balflower," he thought. "I have met with cruelty so often that I am accustomed and hardened to it, else I could not have spoken my own death-warrant. She has appeared to belong to my life. It was I who first discovered her struggling alone, and who encouraged her to be what she is. It may be years before I can come back. I could not ask her to wait for me."

A 'bus went by unheeded.

"I thank God that I had strength to hold my tongue," he continued to reflect, "and yet I am weak—wretchedly weak. I am longing to go back and see her once more. Why should I not go back? It may be the last time before I die."

He went up the stairs softly, almost guiltily. He was sure now of his strength.

He could not see her at once in the darkened studio, but when his eyes became accustomed to his surroundings he saw that she was kneeling with her arms clasped round the neck of the sculptured Cossack, and that all the youth had died out of her face. Zambrena gave a cry of mingled happiness and remorse, and caught her in his arms, unmindful now of his stern resolution.

"Do not worship that graven image whilst a human heart is starving for your affection," he said brokenly. And then—"I did not mean to ask you to share my troubled life, but my love has conquered my human kindness."

Her eyes were bright again, and her youth had returned.

Later she said:

"I am not afraid of any peril while you are with me, Sergius, and now we will never be apart. Have you never learned that there is no cruelty so fatal to a woman as the tragedy of being separated from the man she loves?"

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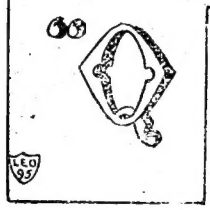
Beauty and the Beast.



UITE comfortable, sir?"

"Yes, thank you, Martin."

"Shall I draw the couch higher up the path?"

"No; leave it alone."

"Very well, sir." The man retreated a few steps, only to return. "You don't think that book is too heavy for you, do you, Sir Charles?"

"Oh, no, Martin. Do go," I cried; for this constant reference to my helplessness was a sore trial to me, as I was paralysed, and as the old fellow went off I shut my eyes with a sigh.

"What a very ugly man!"

Opening my eyes with terror—for my hermit-like existence had rendered me as timid as a woman—I saw a little child standing at some paces from me.

"What are you doing here? How did you get here?"

My voice, rendered angry by surprise and distrust—for I dreaded that the child should be followed by others—did not in the least seem to frighten the little intruder. She did not answer, but she stood looking steadily at me, and I, in return, looked steadily back at her. Such a pretty little girl!

"Come here, little one. So I am very ugly, am I? Well now, do you know who I am?"

She nodded wisely, answering me in the soft, deliberate voice I was soon to love so dearly:

"Yes, I know: you are the Beast."

"The what?"

She was clasping a tattered picture-book in both her chubby hands, and she now held it out straight before her, peeping over the top with solemn blue eyes.

"Beauty and the Beast."

I read the title, and then took her treasure from her, wondering what on earth she could mean.

"And the house and the garden were always shut up quite tight. No one ever saw the poor Beast, because he was so ugly he would not come out. But he was very lonely and miserable, and all the time he hoped that Beauty would come."

"That's it," cried the child delighted. "Does Beauty ever come?"

"No, Beauty never came. It hurt her to look on me. She was so 'sensitive,' you know."

I spoke very bitterly, but my new friend only smiled in reply.

"That's all right," said she, comfortably. "We don't want her, you and I. And now, I suppose it is time to have some cake, isn't it?"

I blew the whistle for Martin, and enjoyed his utter amazement at the sight of my little visitor.

"It is little Miss Trent, one of the Vicar's daughters."

Martin lifted her off the couch, and then, without the slightest warning, she stood on tip-toe, and then kissed me good-bye.

"When you say your prayers to-night you'll hold my kisses quite tightly," she said quaintly.

"Good-bye, dear Beast."

"Good-bye, dear Beauty," and Winifred was gone.

Little Winifred Trent, or "Beauty," as I always called her, cherishing the pretty fancy that had first led me to her, came to me day by day throughout these summer months.

My couch had been wheeled into the garden, now in the full blaze of its August glory, and Beauty was near me digging in her own little plot of ground.

"Beauty, come here, darling, and show me the flowers."

I called to the child, but the industrious little gardener did not hear me. She had wandered further down the path, and was now nearly out of sight

Suddenly my couch began to move!

You who are able to protect yourselves, who have full control of your limbs, and who can guard off any danger that menaces you—you will understand me when I say that my heart literally stood still with terror. I felt for the whistle; it had fallen to the ground. The couch started down hill, rolling somewhat slowly at first, but gaining speed with every turn of the wheels.

"Don't be afraid. I'll stop you! I'll stop you!"

The voice, Beauty's voice, rang out clear and shrill.

"Go away, darling, go away!" I screamed, as the space between us rapidly lessened. "Don't touch me! Oh, God, save the child!"

The agony in my voice arrested her steps, and for one moment she stood motionless, beautiful as a guardian angel who wards the path of danger; and the next—ah! how can I write it? She was knocked down, the coach stopped with a jerk as the wheel ground into the little, soft body as it turned over, and I was flung out on the path.

When I awoke to consciousness I was in my own room. "He is all right," I heard someone say; and then another voice replied, "I wish the poor little girl was as well as he is; she is dying."

I lay and listened to them as a man in a dream.

"Martin, take me to her."

"Mr. Charlie, my poor lad! You mustn't go."

"Martin, I must go. You can carry me well enough!"

"Carry you? I'd die for you, Mr. Charles!"

And thus, carried in the same kind arms which had first held me as a child, I went to kiss my Beauty good-bye.

The child was apparently asleep, and there I waited by her. Some one (I suppose the doctor) was whispering to me, and telling me that my darling was free from pain, and that very likely she would leave us in her sleep.

"Without one word!"

As I spoke Beauty opened her eyes, and looked full at me.

"Read 'Beauty and the Beast,' she whispered. "It is almost time to go home, isn't it?"

"Not to-night, my darling! I can't read to-night!" My voice choked as I strove to answer her, but the weak whisper was repeated.

"But you always read it before I go. Do read it to-night."

Tears stood in the sweet blue eyes as she reiterated her request; and then I felt a book was put in my hand, and I was told to read—the child must go in peace. "Yes, I will read it, Beauty."

"Thank you, dear Beast."

"'And the house and the garden were always shut up quite tight. No one ever saw the poor Beast, because he was so ugly he would not come out. But he was very lonely and miserable, and all the time he hoped that Beauty would come.'"

For a moment my eyes grew dim. That very sentence had first brought her to me, and now?—Ah, Beauty, Beauty!

"'And the Beauty and the Beast were very happy together. They loved each other very much.'"

A tiny sigh broke from the child's lips, and I stopped in sudden fear.

"It is almost time to go home, isn't it, Beast?"

"Yes, my darling, very, very soon."

"I'm so glad. Finish it quick."

"'Till at last they wanted Beauty to go back to her father's home. And they sent for her, and the poor Beast had to let her go.'"

With faltering voice and bowed head I had read on. Now—the angels had flown back to Paradise, and the little child could no longer hear me.

Beauty had gone to her Father's Home.

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